Should the Hood Diversion facility continue to be a part of the Preferred Program Alternative?

Given concerns over the potential water quality benefits as well as the potential impacts to fisheries, the Management Group requested that CALFED staff describe three possible alternatives for dealing with the Hood facility and the implications of each on completion of the Programmatic EIS/EIR.

1. Current approach- include a Hood diversion component (up to 4,000 cfs) in the preferred alternative, but build it only if:

a. The Water Quality Program measures do not result in continuous improvements toward drinking water goals; and

b. A thorough assessment of Delta Cross Channel operations confirms a continued concern over its water quality impacts; and

c. A thorough evaluation confirms the technical viability of the Hood facility; and

d. Satisfactory resolution of the fisheries concerns related to the facility.

If these evaluations demonstrate that a diversion facility is necessary to address drinking water quality concerns and can be constructed without adversely affecting fish populations, it is included as part of the programmatic decision.

As with any other action encompassed within the programmatic preferred alternative, the Hood facility would have to undergo site-specific environmental evaluation (pursuant to NEPA and CEQA) prior to a final decision to construct.

No effect on existing Programmatic EIS/EIR or schedule.

2. Excluding Hood from the preferred alternative, but retaining the option to consider it in the future. This approach is similar to that taken with an isolated conveyance facility; it is outside the scope of this decision, but will be one of many options that can be considered in the future. Under this option, a final decision this summer will exclude the Hood element from the preferred programmatic alternative.

a. Simply eliminating the Hood diversion from the preferred alternative would require the revision of the impact analyses, the response to comments, Phase II and other portions of the EIS/EIR. These changes could probably be completed in approximately 30-60 days. However, by eliminating a major in-delta water quality action, the Program has lost a useful tool for addressing water quality problems in the south and central Delta. The implications of this action to water quality may be so great as to trigger the need to modify and recirculate the EIS/EIR. The 30-60 day estimate for changes does not include the period of time necessary to print and recirculate the document.

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b. If in addition to deleting the Hood diversion, the preferred alternative sought to modify operations of the Cross Channel gates to address water quality concerns, we are venturing into issues that were not addressed in the programmatic EIR/EIR. Gate operations in the evaluations completed for the EIS/EIR are limited to those described in the November 1997 U.S. Department of Interior "Final Administrative proposal on the Management of Section 3406(b)(2) Water."

   Potential water quality benefits and negative effects on fisheries associated with modified operations of the Delta Cross channel would probably need to be included in the impact analysis in many resource areas, the response to comments, and throughout the document. These changes would probably trigger recirculation.

Either option (eliminating Hood or eliminating Hood and modifying Cross Chanel Gate operations) would cause delays in completing the EIS/EIR.

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